

NCA
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CONFLICTING SMOKE SIGNALS

ANNCR:

RESEARCHERS AT THE U.S. NATIONAL CANCER INSTITUTE SAY THAT SOME CIGARETTES HAVE BEEN RENDERED LESS HARMFUL THROUGH THE REMOVAL OF POISONOUS SUBSTANCES FROM THEIR TOBACCO. THREE DAYS EARLIER, THE AMERICAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION RELEASED THE RESULTS OF A LONG STUDY WHICH HAS FOUND THAT CIGARETTE SMOKING CAN CAUSE IRREVERSIBLE HEART DAMAGE AND MIGHT BE RESPONSIBLE FOR DISORDERS RANGING FROM INDIGESTION TO CANCER. -- VOA SCIENCE EDITOR LASZLO DOSA PREPARED THIS BACKGROUND REPORT ON THESE CONFLICTING SMOKE SIGNALS.

VOICE:

ACCORDING TO A REPUTABLE SCIENTIST, DOCTOR GIO BATTAGRI, DEPUTY DIRECTOR OF THE CANCER PREVENTION PROGRAM OF THE NATIONAL CANCER INSTITUTE, RECENT PROGRESS IN THE REMOVAL OF TAR, NICOTINE AND OTHER HARMFUL SUBSTANCES FROM A FEW BRANDS OF AMERICAN CIGARETTES HAS MADE THOSE CIGARETTES LESS HAZARDOUS FOR THE AVERAGE SMOKER. DOCTOR GORI STRESSED, HOWEVER, THAT HE IS NOT CALLING ANY CIGARETTE "SAFE." NEVERTHELESS, HE EXPECTS TO SEE A DECLINE IN LUNG CANCER AND OTHER CIGARETTE-RELATED DISEASES AND HE LINKS THIS DECLINE TO THE AVAILABILITY OF LESS HARMFUL CIGARETTES.

DESPITE THE REDUCED HAZARD ASSOCIATED WITH THE IMPROVED CIGARETTES, DOCTOR GORI WARNS THAT PEOPLE IN THE SO-CALLED HIGH RISK GROUPS SHOULD NEVER SMOKE. THESE INCLUDE ANYONE WHO HAS BEEN EXPOSED TO ASBESTOS, WOMEN USING ORAL CONTRACEPTIVES, PREGNANT WOMEN, AND PEOPLE WITH HEART AND LUNG DISORDERS. AND, IN AN ADDED WARNING TO THE REST OF THE POPULATION,

NATIONAL CANCER INSTITUTF DIRECTOR ARTHUR UPTON DECLARED THAT OUR PRESENT KNOWLEDGE IS NOT SUFFICIENT TO SAY HOW MUCH SMOKING WOULD BF SAFE.

THE GORI REPORT ON LESS HAZARDOUS CIGARETTFS CAME JUST A FEW DAYS AFTER THE RELEASE OF ANOTHER RFPORT WHICH HAS UNEQUIVOCALLY DECLARED THAT CIGARETTE SMOKING PLAYS AN IMPORTANT ROLE IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF CHRONIC, OBSTRUCTIVE LUNG DISEASE AND "CONSTITUTES A GRAVE DANGER TO INDIVIDUALS WITH PRE-EXISTING DISEASES OF THE CORONARY ARTERIFS."

THIS RFPORT, PREPARED BY RESEARCHERS OF THE AMERICAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION, CARRIES ADDED WFEIGHT IN THE SENSE THAT IT WAS FINANCED BY A MULTI-MILLION DOLLAR GRANT FROM NONE OTHER THAN THE AMERICAN TOBACCO INDUSTRY. THE RESEARCH WAS FOCUSSSED ON THE HARMFUL EFFECTS OF SMOKING OTHER THAN ITS WELL-ESTABLISHED ROLE IN CANCER OF THE LUNG AND OTHFR ORGANS. THE SCIENTISTS HAVE FOUND, AMONG OTHER THINGS, THAT SMOKING INCREASES THE RISK OF BLOOD CLOTS THAT COULD CAUSE STROKES OR HEART ATTACKS. NICOTINE HAS BEEN FOUND RESPONSIBLE FOR STOMACH DISORDERS, RANGING FROM INDIGESTION TO ULCERS. THE STUDY HAS ALSO ESTABLISHED THAT CIGARETTE SMOKE MIGHT INHIBIT THE BODY'S DEFENSES AGAINST BACTERIA. AS A RESULT, SMOKERS ARF MORE SUSCEPTIBLE TO INFECTIONS, EVEN TO THE COMMON COLD.

THE AMERICAN TOBACCO INDUSTRY IS TRYING HARD TO REDUCE THE HAZARDS OF SMOKING. BUT IN THE FINAL ANALYSIS, IT IS UP TO THE INDIVIDUAL SMOKER TO DECIDE WHETHER HE WANTS TO RISK HIS HEALTH. BECAUSE, IN THE WORDS OF THE CANCER INSTITUTE'S DOCTOR GORI, NO MATTER HOW MUCH POISON HAS BEEN REMOVED FROM CIGARFTTES, "THE ONLY CIGARETTE THAT IS SAFE IS THE CIGARETTE THAT IS NOT LIT."

RK/PY